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ABSTRACT

In the Haida nation, there are two phratries, Eagle and Raven, divided into a number of clans sharing one or more emblems. These emblems, inherited from the mother's line, adorn the button blankets which are the traditional ceremonial robes that serve to identify the family of the wearer. Written instructions and diagrams guide students in constructing their own Haida button blankets including materials, measuring, sewing, and executing the emblem pattern. Black and white photographs illustrate a variety of blanket designs. Related vocabulary words are listed in Haida and English; the texts of eight Haida dance songs are included. (JH)

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THE HAIDA BUTTON BLANKET

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The Haida Button Blanket

In the olden days our mothers would have said, "When you wear your button blanket hold your head up and show your family emblem." The value of the button blanket you are going to make is very high. In the monetary sense your blanket will be worth hundreds of dollars. Of course, you would never sell it, it would be like selling your birthright. That's your identification.

Even today if you go to another Haida village and come out with your blanket people seeing your family emblem can tell where you come from and what family you belong to. That is the true value of your button blanket.

When you listen and ask questions about your Haida culture, you soon realize what wisdom and beauty it has and feel better about yourself as a result.

Eagle Raven

BEAVER	BROWN BEAR
BULL HEAD	DOUBLE FIN KILLER WHALE
SCULPIN	THUNDERBIRD
HALIBUT	OWL
FROG	DOGFISH SHARK

In the Haida nation there are two phratries. One is "Eagle" and the other is "Raven". We do not choose the design for our button blanket, we inherit it. We have no choice. If your mother is Raven then naturally you are a Raven. You go on your mother's line.

These phratries are divided into a number of sub clans or groups of persons with closer blood ties who share one or more crests. You cannot claim your father's emblem. On very special and rare occasions you can come out and dance with your father's emblem. My father is "Eagle" and his family emblem is Double Head Eagle. On a special occasion I may dance with my father's design but I could not claim it.

If you have a non-native mother she can be adopted into the tribe. Then it would be proper for her children to claim that family emblem. In Sitka, they had a potlatch and a lot of the elderly people adopted a group of children. Names and emblems were given. It was very beautiful.

The elderly are our resource people. They will guide us through the choosing of our design and the proper construction of our Ceremonial Robe, so that we will be Haidas who sing loudly and dance with pride.

Materials

BLACK AND RED CLOTH

EMBLEM PATTERN

NEEDLES

THREAD

BUTTONS

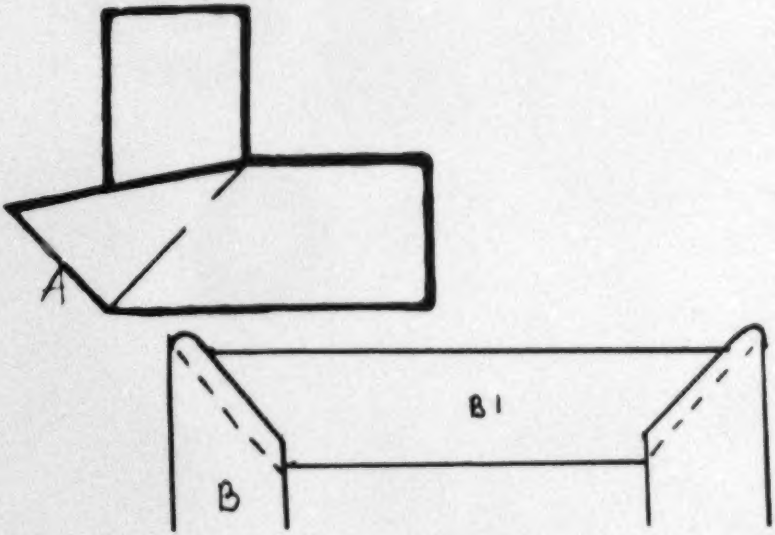
Measure and cut your black felt to ankle length. Measure the sides of your blanket and cut three pieces of red felt 6 inches wide and as long as your measurements indicated.

Use a sewing machine to sew the borders to three sides of the black felt.

Miter the corners and then fold over and hand sew the border to your blanket.

The Crucial Corner

For mitered corners crease the hem on all three sides then turn at the corner and fold the material cutting away surplus felt.



Mitering is a neat and easy means of eliminating bulk at corners. Since your goal is to achieve a flat, neat looking miter you must concentrate on trimming at just the right moment in your mitering plan.

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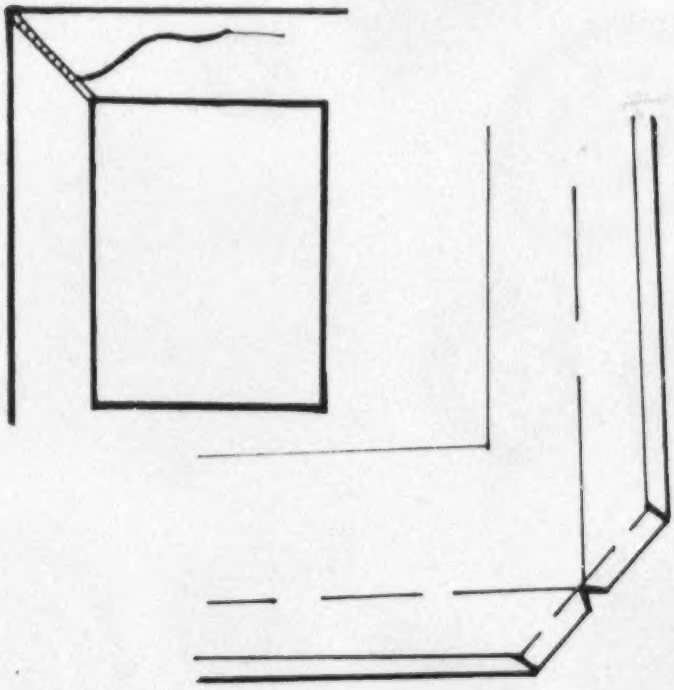
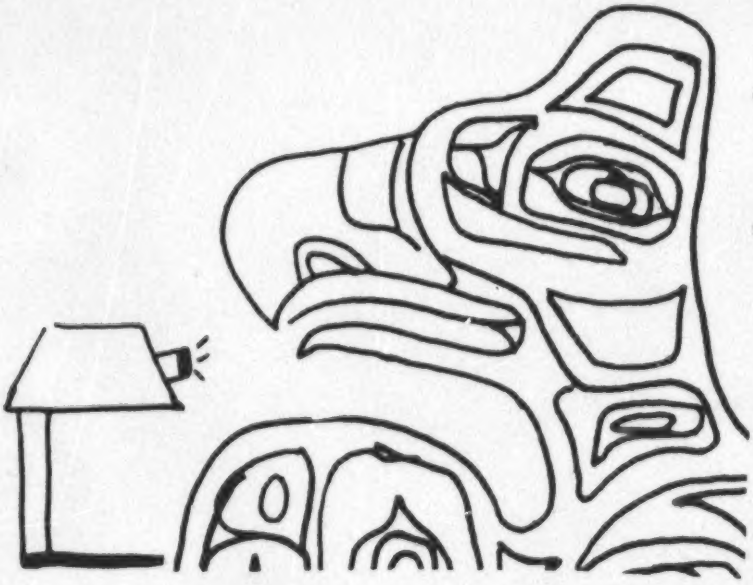
Bring the edge together in a true bias miter. Turn them inside the hem, and whip them together with short stitches.



Never allow the material to fold in the corners. This will make the corners appear heavy. Bring the stitches all the way out to the point so that a perfect corner is made.

Design

Use an overhead projector to enlarge your family emblem.



Now use your paper pattern to cut your design from the material.

We must take special care when we are centering and hand sewing the design to the back of the Button Blanket. We want it to hang straight and proud when we dance.

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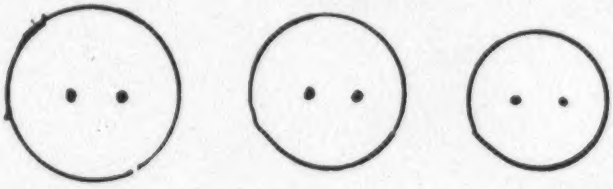
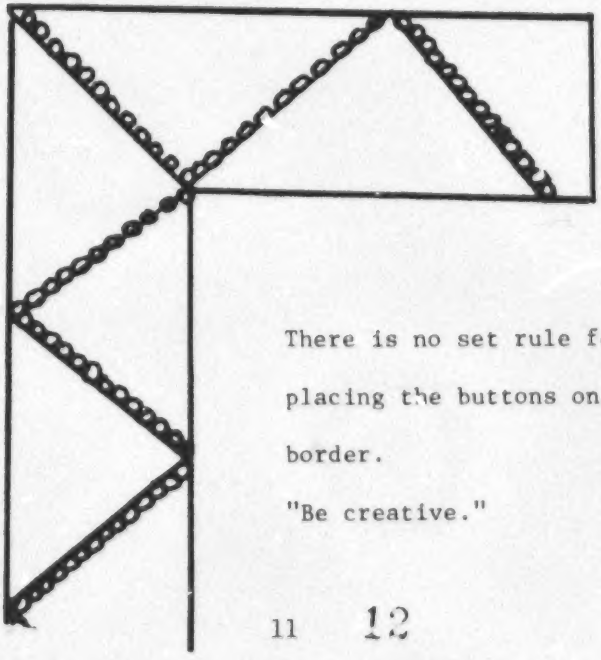
Buttons

There are three different size buttons to plan into the design. Generally we use the larger buttons for the outside border and the smaller buttons for the inside design.





There is no set rule for placing the buttons on the border.

"Be creative."

Haida Words

DANCE	-	xyáahl
DANCE HAT	-	xaats sadáa
DEDICATE A SONG	-	gyaa k'uyáng
DRUM	-	gáwjaaw
DANCE STICK	-	kilsgagáangw
RAVEN	-	yáahl
EAGLE	-	ts'áak
KILLER WHALE	-	sgáan
BROWN BEAR	-	xúuts
BULLHEAD	-	k'aal
BEAVER	-	ts'áng
BLANKET	-	gíntás
BUTTON	-	guuláangw
BEAD	-	gawíit
NEEDLE	-	stlíinaay

Haida Songs

Entrance Song
Aay yei iiyah uu uu
uu ei
ay yei ay yei ii yah
ii yah uu uu uu ei

Aanaa hei
Aanaa hei naaygadigii baahlas maayga aana hei
Sitkum daallaa aanaa heiya, aanaa hei
Aanaa heiya, aanaa hei, aanaa heiya, aanaa hei
(2 times)

SAN YAAHL GIDUU
San yaahl giduu dii saa kingaang
kil tl'aa tl'gudang
glangaas dingaan waask'aanaanuu
dang anhl kil ilaa
asgaayst waatsgwaa diist dang kingaangdaalsang
eiyaa eiyaa

Dog Fish
iiyah anah aa iiyah ei
iiyah anah aa iiyah ei
iiyah anah aa iiyah ei
(Repeat)

Yaahkw Lannaas Git'alang
Aaliyah lii aala alii aay aala
Aal ahlii aa
Aalii ahlii aa
Aalii ahlii aa
Aalii ahlii aalaa
Jaa haw tlii gudii
dang sudaa kuudaals
Yahkw lannaas git'alang
tlii yaatgaa uugin
aaliyah lii aa
aaliyah lii aa
aaliyah lii alaa

SANGYAAS DII HLGWAAGAAS
IIYAAY AALAA SANGYAAS AAS GI DII HLGWAAGAAS
iiyaayaalaa gudang aanghl gaandaangs jaanaay
iiyaay aalaa sangyaas aas ga dii hlgwaagaas

Eagle Dance
Jiwaay guuthl aaxikawyaang daal
Jiwaay guuthl aaxikawyaang daal
aagaa gwaanaa aagaa
gwaanaa aagaa gwaanaa
aagaa gwaanaa aa

Exit Song
Yah ahaay ii hii, yah ahaay ii
hii aa aa yah ahaay ii hii.

Haida Dance

Wearing your Button Blanket and dancing go together.